DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 326 CG 029 894

AUTHOR Matsushita, Yuriko; Matsushita, Koji
TITLE Video Games: A Potential New World.
PUB DATE 1997-05-00
NOTE 7p.; In: Caring in an Age of Technology. Proceedings of the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (6th, Beijing, China, May 29-30, 1997); see CG 029 879.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Rearing; Foreign Countries; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Participation; Psychological Studies; Therapeutic Recreation; *Video Games
IDENTIFIERS Japan

ABSTRACT

The paper states that there are negative physical and psychological effects from video games. The physical effects include asthenopia and weight gain. The psychological effects include confusion between reality and fiction, and immature relationships with others. However, video games can also have a therapeutic effect in some cases. Four positive effects mentioned are: (1) video games satisfy desires which are not allowed in daily life; (2) video games can be a common interest for the family; (3) video games allow for roles which cannot be duplicated in real life; and (4) video games protect one's own world from intrusion. The paper concludes that video games should be understood for what they are before they are judged to be good or bad. It suggests that mothers and fathers communicating with their children about video games would be helpful. (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 326

Video Games; A Potential New World

Yuriko Matsushita (Osaka City University)
Koji Matsushita (Osaka City University, Kurokawa Internal Medicine)

The first author is a Ph.D. candidate student in clinical psychology at the Osaka City University. She works in many places, such as, the Public Family and Child Guidance Center, a mental hospital, a private counseling center and so on. Through these various kinds of jobs, she has tried to find an useful and clinical idea academically for therapy. The second author is also a Ph.D. candidate in the same department. He is working at the Kurokawa Internal Medicine as a clinical psychologist.

I . How video games have permeated into society.

Video Games do not have a very long history. The first video game was sold in 1983 by Nintendo in Japan. The main feature of this game was the ability to play at home. It was named the "Family Computer" in Japanese, which brought forth an image that it was an easy and familiar product.

Now video games have diversified and many kinds of software have been developed. Because of advanced high technology various games can be played. For example, fighter shooting games, boxing games, go-cart games, even role-playing games. The hardware of games has also diversified. Ranging from video game sets which use communication satellites, to hand-held portable games small enough to be placed on a key ring.

Video games are very popular from children to adults in Japan. But in particular video games are all the rage with children. During recess time at school they talk about only video games, like how to clear some scene of a game, what new software is out and so on. After school, children make plans with each other to decide at who's house they will play. Children who do not know video games feel difficulty to join them. Young adults who used to play video games during their childhood do not feel ashamed to enjoy video games even when they become adults. One factor why video games are enjoyable for adults is because the games themselves have become more complex and interesting enough to satisfy adults.

Furthermore not only video games themselves but also connected goods are also popular, for example, a doll of a character in a video game. The books to teach the strategy to play game are full of in a book store. Journals of video games are published regularly.

II .Review of opinions about video games.

Parents complain and worry about the bad effects video games have on children. Generally speaking, this negative assertion is held by some critics, too.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
W. EVRAIFF
BEST COPY AVAILABLE
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG029894

First, some bad effects of video games will be shown.

1.Physical effects.

·Asthenopia (Sano,1997)

·Weight gain (Murata,1989)

2.Psychological and emotional effects.

·Confusion between reality and fiction.

·Immature relationships with others.(Isolation) (Fukaya;1989)

The first opinion of psychological and emotional effects by video games was publicized by the mass media as if it was true, but there are no documents which confirm that confusion between reality and fiction exists. Some people object this opinion.

Murata(1989) showed three types of bad outcomes by devoting oneself to computers; 1.Game oriented types, 2.Infomaniac types, 3.Hacker types. He said that all three types are apt to connect with relationship disorders because they do not maintain direct relationships.

There is a person who has a neutral opinion about video games. Sakamoto(1993) criticized that the effect of video games by journalists was too intuitive and biased. He researched the relationship between aggression and video games and came to the conclusion that although the relationship between aggression and video games could not be denied, it is not as serious problem as the mass media thinks. The bad effect was recognized only after small children played a game, not adults. So it was difficult to say whether the bad effect of the video game was stronger than that of other activities.

Recently some people have been trying to defend the effects of video games. Yamashita(1995), who is a padagogist, sights some merits of video games as follows;

1.The ability to find a new world which is not uncomfortable for oneself.

2.The ability to play a game at one's own pace without anybody telling them what to do.

3.they do not have to play games that they do not like.

4.The ability to get rid of frustration and heal mental fatigue.

Nakahara(1995), who is a psychotherapist, reported four cases of play therapy where video games were used. She said that children who were distrustful of others, hated face to face situations and as a result had a lot of tension in direct relationships. They also had low self-esteem. For children like this, video games were safe, that is, video games never laughed or made fools of them and they could play again and again, even if they failed. Still more, video games were suitable for breaking off their immature aggression.

Kayama(1996), who is a psychiatrist, also reported some cases and experiences of herself. She used video games for treatment of severe compulsive obsession, mutism, schizophrenia and so on. She said it was impossible now to judge whether video games were effective for treatment or not. However she tried to state what she had noticed so far. She put her ideas into five points.

3 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1.Video games are kind to a wounded heart.

2.They can play a game without worrying about their symptoms.

3.Video games have different rules and logic from real life.

4.Abstract concepts are also different in the video game's world.

5.Occasionally, some patients get well suddenly.

She insists that a video game is a new world which have original rules and logic -quite different from the real world. So the possibilities of this new world need to be thought about, for example, whether an experience in this world can develop an ego or not, if it is possible, what that ego is, etc. At the same time it cannot be said that the effect of video games for treatment manifests a simple progression like the ability to do something difficult in a game's world and then to be able to do same thing in the real world too.

Ⅲ .Our clinical cases which make us consider possibilities of video games.

We do not use video games themselves for therapy, but often the subject of about video games frequently comes up from clients. Through these experiences we came across, four cases which made consider what the effect of video games were and how we can use them for therapy.

Case 1. In this case, the counselor met a father who worried about his son. His son was in 5th grade at an elementary school, but for his age he was restless and too impulsive. He had many troubles at school. His parents lived separately and he lived with his father. During the early stages of counseling the father did not understand his son's impulsive behavior and always scolded him. After a while the father bought a used computer for himself to play games. Playing video games became their common hobby. Their favorite was a war simulation game. By playing the same game, the father was astounded at his son's ability to memorize the name of weapons, the kinds of fighters and so on. Gradually the father came to understand his son and communication between them become smoother than before. The father himself said " Video games are a part of my child world in my mind. People might say it is not grown-up, but I treasure it." These days the son asks his father to teach him how to play another game, which is to make a house. Both of them, together attempt to make a house in the game world.

Case 2. In this case the problem was a 17 year old boy's violence at home. After he had dropped out of high school, his father found a part time job for him. Since he started it, he showed signs of mental illness, for instance, speaking alone, compulsive washing, etc. At home he started to withdraw and never went outside. If he wanted to get something, he ordered his mother or his younger brother to buy it. From that time the counselor met his mother. She said that his intense violence had settled down, and yet he sometimes exploded into impulsive

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

aggression by throwing down the TV. set, tearing his mother's skirt, or throwing a cup at his brother. Except for these episodes he had not done anything else. The mother always complained "He stays in his own room all day and does nothing except watch TV. or play games. He does not look like he is having any anxiety or trouble." The counselor asked her "What kind of game does he play?" Her answer was "I do not know." She seemed to have no interest about it. After several counseling sessions, she reported to me that her son liked a wrestling game. At the same time he recorded wrestling programs on video tape and watched them again and again. We noticed how he concentrated on wrestling. In time, he actually started to wrestle his brother at home. Several months later, he wanted to watch alive wrestling match at a stadium directly. Subsequently and he went to alive matches several times. One day his mother became aware that her son had completely lost his interest for wrestling and that his aggressive behavior disappeared. Now although it did not become possible for him to go out his attitudes has changed and he is able to stay in a living room and playing video games with his brothers.

Case 3. In this case the counselor also met a mother who consulted about her youngest son. Her son did not have good relationships with his classmates and did not like to go to school. He was in 6th grade, but his immature personality and low self-esteem were remarkable. From what his mother said, the counselor thought the family dynamics were problematical. The father suffered from a mental disease. Although he loved his son very much, his emotions would suddenly change. He would loudly scold and slap his son. The son feared his father and stayed away from him. The mother became critical toward the father's relation to the son and thought it natural that her son hated his father. The mother herself seemed to have a very rigid personality. Through our counseling, we talked about many things and in one session a small episode made the counselor notice the changing of the family dynamics. It was a session about one video game. The mother said delightfully "Now we, -my husband, my son and myself, are absorbed in a farm simulation game." In this game, they each became an owner of a farm, and brought up horses for racing. The son would brag to his father that his farm earned a lot of money and he would lend his father some money. The counselor was also surprised that the mother enjoyed the game. She had previously said that video games were stupid.

Case 4. The case of a high school student will be presented. He did not do anything but video games after school. His sister worried about his situation and talked about it during her counseling.(She had her own mental problem and came to the counseling at regular intervals.) According to her, their parents meddled with them, especially the son from his childhood. He was 17 years old but he could not have his own room. He shared one room with his parents. At his age, independence is big theme psychologically. His devotion to video games probably help

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

him to escape from his parents' meddling and to get into his own world where his parents cannot enter. Incidentally he is pleased with role-playing games.

Ⅳ. Summary and suggestion about the possibility of video games

Through these cases we have pointed out four therapeutic effects of video games.

1. Video games are suitable for satisfying desires which are not allowed in daily life, for example, immature aggression. They can sometimes even help in real life situations, like in case 2.
2. Video games can be a plaything for the family. By using them like this, family dynamics and communication styles can change.
3. We can take roles which cannot actually be done in the real world. But this involves the risky aspect of not being able to stop playing that role after the game has ended and continue the role in the real world. This is the most important problem to think about when using video games for therapy.
4. Video games protect one's own world that nobody can break into. This point also has risks, for instance, devotion to the video games, withdrawal from society, and escaping from the real world which causes maladaptive problems to society.

We also want to show some hypothetical methods of using video games for counseling. There are two usages of video games indirectly or directly. In counseling using video games indirectly, we meet the family members except for the person who has the mental problem. In many cases parents complain that their children are devoted to video games. But his favorite video games are very good material for the counselor to understand symbolically his inner world. We are interested in video games which the children play at home, even if the parents do not have any interests. As the counselor asks more and more question about video games, the parents gradually loose their negative estimation of their children and also become interested in video games. At least now they understand video games have a significant meaning for their children. But since we cannot see the person who has the mental problem, we should check his personality, ego strength, family dynamics and so on.

In counseling using video games directly, we suggest some possibilities. First it is considered that playing video games has therapeutic effects. At the same time, the existence of a therapist is significant for therapy. By meeting clients directly and making sure of one's state, it is possible to choose, or to be chosen, a suitable game for one's problem.

Lastly we add that it seems that devoting oneself to video games alone is risky. We insist that the devotion, that is, the existence of others is very important. According to the cases we presented, we found the families who played video games together, the mother who were interested in the son's video games. In a counseling situation, of course, a counselor exists. This opinion does not mean that families should play video games together. A person can play

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a video game alone, but it is important that one can share the experiences from the video game's world, for example, by talking about the game with family members, exchanging the information of video games with friends and so on. We should understand what video games are, before we whether judge they are good or bad. Now it is necessary to study the possibilities of video games, a potential new world.

References

Shichiro Sano (1997), Video Games and Eyes, *Education and Medical Science*, (in Japanese) vol.525, 43-48.

Mitsunori Murata (1989), Computer and Children's Health, *Video Game Syndrome*, (in Japanese) 153-167.

Masashi Fukaya (1989), Children in The Age of Mass Media, *Video Game Syndrome*, (in Japanese), 200-223.

Akira Sakamoto (1993), Is It True that Video Games Have Bad Effects? -About Aggression and Social Maladapting in Social psychological research. *Modern Esprit*, (in Japanese) vol.312.

Tsuneo Yamashita (1995), *The World from Video Games' View*. (in Japanese)

Yoshie Nakahara (1989), The Pathology of Children Devoting to Video Games, *Video Game Syndrome*, (in Japanese), 1-30.

Rika Kayama (1996), *Video games and Healing* (in Japanese).